

South Atlantic
Frequently Asked Questions
Regulations for Blueline Tilefish and Species in the Deep-Water Complex

**Final Rule for Amendment 32 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan
of the South Atlantic Region**

March 2015

What is the final rule for Amendment 32?

- The final rule implements the actions contained in Amendment 32 as submitted by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to NOAA Fisheries.
- The regulations are effective beginning March 30, 2015.

What are the actions in Amendment 32 for blueline tilefish?

- Implementation of annual catch limits and accountability measures for the commercial and recreational sectors.
- Implementation of a recreational annual catch target.
- Implementation of a commercial trip limit of 100 pounds gutted weight.
- Implementation of a recreational vessel limit of one per vessel per day for the months of May through August each year. Recreational harvest of blueline tilefish will be prohibited September through April each year.
- Removal of blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex.

Why are these actions for blueline tilefish being implemented?

- The blueline tilefish population was assessed in 2013. The assessment determined blueline tilefish to be undergoing overfishing (rate of fish removal too high). The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries are required by law to prepare and implement a plan amendment and regulations to end overfishing by December 6, 2015.
- The implementation of annual catch limits and accountability measures for blueline tilefish is necessary to end overfishing.

How are the actions related to the blueline tilefish emergency rule?

- At its December 2013 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council requested NOAA Fisheries to implement temporary blueline tilefish annual catch limits and accountability measures through emergency action with the goal of reducing the level of overfishing of blueline tilefish while Amendment 32 was being developed.
- In response, NOAA Fisheries published an emergency rule on April 17, 2014, that implemented temporary measures to reduce overfishing of blueline tilefish. Those

measures were extended through a temporary rule on October 14, 2014, and are effective through April 18, 2015.

- The temporarily measures include the removal of blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex, the implementation of annual catch limits and accountability measures for blueline tilefish, and revisions to the annual catch limits for the deep-water complex.

What species are currently in the deep-water complex?

- Yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper.
- Blueline tilefish has been temporarily removed from the deep-water complex.

What are accountability measures and what accountability measures are being implemented for blueline tilefish?

- Accountability measures are management controls to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded and to correct overages of the catch limits if they do occur.
- The following *in-season* accountability measure is being implemented for blueline tilefish: If commercial or recreational landings for blueline tilefish reach or are projected to reach the applicable annual catch limit, then the commercial or recreational sector, as applicable, will be closed for the remainder of the fishing year. The recreational sector will not have an in-season closure if NOAA Fisheries determines, using the best scientific information available, that a closure will be unnecessary.
- The following *post-season* accountability measure is being implemented for blueline tilefish for the *commercial sector*: For the commercial sector, if commercial landings exceed the commercial annual catch limit, and the combined commercial and recreational annual catch limit is exceeded, and blueline tilefish are overfished, then during the following fishing year the commercial annual catch limit will be reduced for that following year by the amount of the commercial annual catch limit overage in the prior fishing year.
- The following *post-season* accountability measure is being implemented for blueline tilefish for the *recreational sector*: If recreational landings for blueline tilefish exceed the applicable recreational annual catch limit, and the combined commercial and recreational annual catch limit is exceeded, and blueline tilefish are overfished, then the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year will be reduced to ensure recreational landings do not exceed the recreational annual catch limit the following fishing year. Additionally, the recreational annual catch limit will be reduced by the amount of the recreational annual catch limit overage from the prior fishing year. However, the recreational fishing season and recreational annual catch limit will not be reduced if NOAA Fisheries determines, using the best scientific information available, that no reduction is necessary.

What are the actions in Amendment 32 for the species in the deep-water complex?

- Removal of blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex.
- Recalculation of the commercial and recreational annual catch limits for the deep-water complex to reflect the removal of blueline tilefish from the complex and revised acceptable catch levels for two species in the complex.
- Revisions to the accountability measures for the commercial and recreational sectors for the deep-water complex.

What changes to the current accountability measures are being implemented for the deep-water complex?

- The accountability measures being implemented for the deep-water complex will be similar to the accountability measures described above for blueline tilefish.

Does this rule change the aggregate grouper and tilefish bag limit for the recreational sector?

- No. The aggregate grouper and tilefish bag limit remains at 3 per person per day. The aggregate group contains the following species: gag, black grouper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowedge grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, sand tilefish, coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind.

Where can I find more information on Amendment 32 and the final rule?

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- Amendment 32 may be found online at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2014/am32/index.html.